

Quotes

I do not know when I have had
happier times in my soul than
when I have been sitting at work
with nothing before me but a candle and a white cloth
and hearing no sound but that of my own breath
with God in my soul and heaven in my eye
I rejoice in being exactly what I am
a creature capable of loving God and
who as long as God lives must be happy
I get up and look a while out the window
I gaze at the moon and stars the work of an Almighty Hand
I think of the grandeur of the universe and
then sit down and think myself one of the happiest beings in it

- Author unknown from the 18th century

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

- The Apostle Paul

Man's steps are ordained by the LORD, How then can man understand his way?

- Proverbs 20:24, NASB

Outline

1. Is there any _____ in pleasure, achievement, and pleasure?
Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

2. Is there any pleasure in _____ wisdom?
Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

3. Death destroys _____.
Ecclesiastes 2:12-23

Life has no meaning the moment you lose the illusion of being eternal.
- Jean-Paul Sartre

4. Only God can give _____ wisdom, knowledge and joy.
Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

Not everything can be fixed! Not everything is a problem to be solved. Some things must be borne, must be suffered and endured. Wisdom does not teach us how to master the world. It does not give us techniques for programming life such that life becomes orderly and predictable....In fact, trying to gain a wisdom that will give you control may make you worse off. It is precisely the task, the work, the endeavor, the toil of mastering life that is vapor—a chasing after dust devils! Instead of gaining leverage, you will only add to your frustration. Solomon carries out a direct frontal assault on the very idea that humanity is able to leverage creation for his own purposes, to wrestle order out of God's inscrutable ways. Wisdom—real biblical wisdom—is not the art of steering or programming the world according to man's purposes. Wisdom does not advise man to search for order or to attempt to master life. Under the sun, one cannot know, one cannot predict, one cannot trace causal connections. Who knows why things happen? Often, trying to figure it out is simply chasing after the wind as if we can catch and contain it. One can only hope and believe. Rejoice in what God has given you to do and trust in him. This the perspective of faith. If control is ultimately not an option, what should you strive for? ... Christian wisdom advocates celebration, rejoicing, and enjoying what God has given for you to enjoy.
- Jeffrey Meyers

Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that what they do want, and want acutely, is something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. . . . There was something we grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. Our unsatisfied longings give us a spiritual clue that we were made for the pleasure of God.
- C. S. Lewis

Life Group Questions

1. Can you think of something you really wanted, but after you got it, it sorely disappointed you? Why do you think the value changed?
2. T or F Faith is trusting God for purposes, happinesses, contentment.

T or F Oprah has some good things to share.

T or F We are bombarded with the world's wisdom every day.

T or F The only way to combat the wrong wisdom is to absorb true wisdom.

T or F We would be happier if we prayed more.

T or F Prayer is a function of true wisdom.

T or F True Christians should be the happiest people in the world.
3. As a group, write a definition of faith, especially as it is informed by Ecclesiastes.
4. What mindset is necessary in order to live happily in the midst of great and seemingly unfair circumstances? Will this help you sleep? Laugh? Help?
5. Which of the quotations from Paul, Proverbs, Sartre, Meyers, Lewis, do you like the best and why?